

in his reference to the peculiar language of Wakhān ; for Wakhī—which is spoken not only by the people of Wakhān but also by the numerous Wakhī colonists spread through Mastūj, Hunza Sarikol, and even further east in the mountains—is a separate language belonging to the well-defined group of Galcha tongues which itself forms the chief extant branch of Eastern Iranian."

XXXII., pp. 171 *seq.*, 175, 182.

THE PLATEAU OF PAMIR.

"On leaving Tāsh-kurghān (July 10, 1900), my steps, like those of Hiuan-tsang, were directed towards Kāshgar. . . . In Chapters V.-VII. of my Personal Narrative I have given a detailed description of this route, which took me past Muztāgh-Ata to Lake Little Kara-kul, and then round the foot of the great glacier-crowned range northward into the Gez defile, finally debouching at Tāshmalik into the open plain of Kāshgari. Though scarcely more difficult than the usual route over the Chichiklik Pass and by Yangi-Hīsar, it is certainly longer and leads for a considerably greater distance over ground which is devoid of cultivation or permanent habitations.

"It is the latter fact which makes me believe that Professor H. Cordier was right in tracing by this very route Marco Polo's itinerary from the Central Pamirs to Kāshgar. The Venetian traveller, coming from Wakhān, reached, after three days, a great lake which may be either Lake Victoria or Lake Chakmak, at a 'height that is said to be the highest place in the world.' He then describes faithfully enough the desert plain called 'Pamier,' which he makes extend for the distance of a twelve days' ride. and next tells us: 'Now, if we go on with our journey towards the east-north-east, we travel a good forty days, continually passing over mountains and hills, or through valleys, and crossing many rivers and tracts of wilderness. And in all this way you find neither habitation of man, nor any green thing, but must carry with you whatever you require.'

"This reference to continuous 'tracts of wilderness' shows clearly that, for one reason or another, Marco Polo did not pass through the cultivated valleys of Tāsh-kurghān or Tagharma, as he would necessarily have done if his route to Kāshgar, the region he next describes, had lain over the Chichiklik Pass. We must assume that, after visiting either the Great or Little Pāmir, he travelled down the Ak-su river for some distance, and then crossing the watershed eastwards by one of the numerous